

Tribes buy ranch to bolster wildlife

Warm Springs tribes pay \$5.6 million for land near Fossil that was ceded to the U.S. government in 1855

By **COURTENAY THOMPSON**
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The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs has purchased a 30,000-acre ranch near the Wheeler County town of Fossil that the tribes will manage to boost populations of wildlife and threatened steelhead.

The \$5.6 million Pine Creek Ranch is a biologically rich landscape of grasslands and cliffs and contains one of only four John Day tributaries where threatened wild steelhead still spawn.

Although the tribes are drafting a management plan, they intend to open the ranch for hunting to both tribal and nontribal members.

The ranch is being bought with wildlife mitigation funds from the federal Bonneville Power Administration. The federal agency is required by Congress to compensate the public for wildlife habitat destroyed by the construction of Columbia River dams.

"It is the first truly significant landscape-scale project done for wildlife in Oregon with Bonneville dollars," said Michael Powelson, fish and wildlife policy analyst for the Northwest Power Planning Council, which recommends projects for BPA funding.

The property is on lands the tribes ceded to the U.S. government in 1855 and is rich with cultural sites, history and traditional tribal foods such as roots.

The cattle ranch just east of Clarno is also adjacent to both the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument and the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry's popular Hancock Field Station, an educational science camp that annually draws 3,000 students from Portland and elsewhere.

It is also near the 64,000-acre Big Muddy Ranch, the former Rajneesh outpost, which is now owned by Young Life Ministries. Powelson said Young Life was considering selling the tribes a conservation easement.

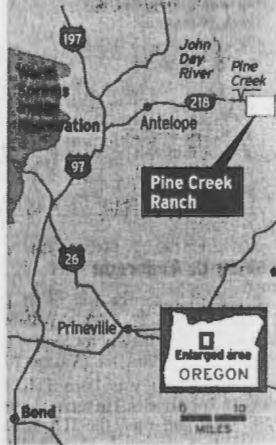
All told, "that's 200,000 acres basically under conservation," Powelson said.

Purchase of the Pine Creek Ranch from Warren Dan Eddleman, who has owned the ranch for the past five years, will also open the property back up to public access, tribal and federal officials said.

The tribes have been working with state and federal officials for the past two years to make the

RANCH SAVED FOR WILDLIFE

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs have purchased the 30,000-acre Pine Creek Ranch east of Antelope using federal hydropower dollars geared to replacing wildlife habitat destroyed by Columbia River dams. The tribes plan to manage the arid rangeland to boost wildlife populations, including threatened steelhead that spawn in Pine Creek.



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deal happen.

"It's the fulfillment of a long-time promise, obligation, to try to restore wildlife species and hunting opportunities and fisheries resources on part of our ceded territory," said Jody Calica, chief operations officer for the tribes.

Calica said the ranch would also be open for educational purposes, working with OMSI and other partners.

"It's an incredibly exciting piece of news that finally came to pass," said Joseph Jones, director of OMSI's Science Camps. "It's an incredibly valuable piece of property, from the standpoint of having an example of what the Lower John Day drainage should really look like."

The ranch provides habitat for 36 animal and plant species that are listed as sensitive, threatened or endangered. It also contains nearly the entire Pine Creek watershed — 12 miles of spawning and rearing habitat for summer steelhead, one of the last remaining native steelhead populations in the John Day.

Elk and deer winter on the ranch, antelope cruise through, and game birds such as chukar are abundant.

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